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1st Edition: October 2010

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Fax: 0033-01-43 57 44 31

E-mail: essalam@essalam.com.

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Darussalam

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D-2-12, Setiawangsa 11, Taman Setiawangsa

54200 Kuala Lumpur

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Website: www.darussalam.com.my

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Islamic Da'wah Movement (IDM)

48009 Qualbert 4078 Durban, South Africa

Ibn Katheer

Early Days

(Stories of the beginning of Creation and the early Prophet from Adam to Yoonus)

Taken from

Al-Bidayah wan-Nihayah

Translation and Researched by
Research Department of Darussalam



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

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King Fahd National Library Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Ibn Kathir

Early days. / Ibn Kathir - Riyadh, 2010

pages: 408 Size: 14x21 cm

ISBN: 978-603-500-044-4

1- Prophets stories 2-Prophets - Biography 1- Title

229.5 dc 1431/8751

L.D. no. 1431/8751

ISBN: 978-603-500-044-4

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discrepancies in *ahadeeth*.

He was appointed as head of Umm As-Salih School and At-Tankaziyyah School, after Adh-Dhahabi.

Adh-Dhahabi referred to him in the explanatory notes of *Tabaqat Al-Huffaz*, and in *Al-Mu'jam Al-Mukhtass* he said: "He is a sound scholar of Islamic Jurisprudence, a verifier of *hadeeth*, a scholar of *tafseer* and a critic. He has written many beneficial works."

Among his written works are

1. *At-Takmeel Fee Ma'rifatith-Thiqat Wal-Majaheel* (The Complete Book of Criticism and Praise and Knowledge of the Trustworthy Reporters and the Unknown Reporters). It combines *Kitab ut-Tahdheeb* and *Al-Meezan* and consists of five volumes.
2. *Jami' Al-Masaneed Was-Sunan Al-Hadi Li-Aqwam Sunan* (The Combined *Musnads* and the *Sunan* Which Guide to the Most Precious *Sunan*); this is said to be one of Ibn Katheer's finest works in the field of *hadeeth* and it is one of the last books that he wrote, though not the very last one. He died before completing it – may Allah have mercy on him. In it, he combined the *musnads* of Imam Ahmad, Al-Bazzar, Abu Ya'la and Ibn Abi Shaibah with the Six Books.

Shaikh Muhammad Abdur-Razzaq Hamzah said in the introduction to the book *Al-Ba'ith Al-Hatheeth*:

His lineage, his birth, his teachers and his upbringing ⁽¹⁾ :

⁽¹⁾ Quoted from *Al-Manhal As-Safi Wal-Mustawa Ba'd Al-Wafi* by the fa-

In the Name of Allah, the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful

Biography of Al-Hafiz Ibn Katheer

He is the *Shaikh*, the *Imam*, the *Hafiz*, 'Imaduddeen Abul Fida' Isma'eel Ibn 'Umar Ibn Katheer Ibn Daw' Ibn Katheer Ibn Dir', originally Al-Busrawi, then Ad-Dimashqi Ash-Shafi'i.

He was born in Mijdal, a village on the outskirts of Busra, in the year 701 A.H., where his father was a *khateeb*. ⁽¹⁾

In the year 706 A.H., he moved to Damascus where he studied Islamic Jurisprudence (*fiqh*) under Shaikh Burhanuddeen Al-Fazari and others. He married the daughter Al-Hafiz Al-Mizzi and reported many traditions from him. He delivered formal legal verdicts, was a teacher and debated with other scholars. He was a leading scholar of Islamic Jurisprudence, *tafseer* and Arabic grammar, in addition to which he applied himself assiduously to the study of *rijal* ⁽²⁾ and weaknesses or

⁽¹⁾ *Khateeb*: The one who delivers the Friday sermon (*khutbah*) in the mosque.

⁽²⁾ *Rijal*: Literally man; here it is used to refer to the narrators of *ahadeeth*.

A Description of the Creation of the Throne, the Kursi, Al-Lawh, the Heavens and the Earth

Chapter On The Words of Allah, Most High: ﴿Allah is the Creator of all things...﴾

Allah, the Most High, says in His Noble Book: ﴿Allah is the Creator of all things and He is the *Wakeel* (Trustee, Disposer of affairs, Guardian, etc.) over all things﴾ (Soorah Az-Zumar 39:62). So everything besides Allah was created by Him, is under His Dominion and His Disposal, and was brought into being, having previously not existed.

The Throne, which is the ceiling of all created things, including everything that lies beneath the Earth and all that exists between it and the Throne – whether animate or inanimate – all of it is His Creation, His Kingdom, His slaves and all are under

His Subjugation and His Power and they are subject to His Disposal and His Will. ﴿He it is Who created the heavens and the Earth in six days and then rose (*istawa*) over the Throne. He knows what goes into the Earth and what comes forth from it, and what descends from the heaven and what ascends thereto. And He is with you wheresoever you may be. And Allah is the All-Seeing of what you do.﴾ (Soorah Al-Hadeed 57:4).

The scholars of Islam, without exception, are in complete agreement – and no Muslim has the slightest doubt of this – that Allah created the heavens and the Earth and all that lies between them in six days, as proven by the Noble Qur'an. But they differed as to whether these days are like Earthly days, or whether each day is equivalent to a thousand years of what you reckon. ⁽¹⁾ In this matter, the scholars are divided into two camps, as we have made clear in the *tafseer* of this Verse and we shall explain this in the relevant place.

They also differed regarding the question of whether or not there existed any creation before the formation of the heavens and the Earth. Some groups among the rationalist theologians supported the idea that nothing existed before them and that they were created from absolute nothingness. Others said that no, before the creation of the heavens and the Earth there were other creations; and they based this claim on the Words of Allah, Most High, ﴿And He it is Who has created the heavens and the Earth in six days and His Throne was over the water.﴾ (Soorah Hood 11:7). In the *hadeeth* narrated by 'Imran Ibn Husain it was stated that "Nothing existed before Allah and His Throne was over the water. He wrote everything in the Tablet,

(1) See Soorah Al-Hajj 22:47.

then He created the heavens and the Earth.”⁽¹⁾

These people disagreed regarding which of them was created first:

Some said that the Pen was created before all of these things and this was the preferred view of Ibn Jareer At-Tabari, Ibn Al-Jawzi and others. Ibn Jareer said: “After the Pen, the fine clouds, and after it, the Throne.” They cited as proof for this the *hadeeth* narrated by Imam Ahmad, Abu Dawood and At-Tirmidhi, on the authority of ‘Ubadah Ibn As-Samit ؓ, who said: The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “The first thing that Allah created was the Pen, then He said to it, ‘Write.’ In that very hour all that was to occur (was written) up to the Day of Resurrection.”⁽²⁾ This is the wording of Ahmad’s narration and At-Tirmidhi said of the *hadeeth*, “(It is) *hasan-saheeh-ghareeb*.”

The opinion of the majority of scholars, according to what has been transmitted by Al-Hafiz Abul-‘Ala’ Al-Hamdani and others, is that the Throne was created before that and this is what was narrated by Ibn Jareer⁽³⁾ via Ad-Dahhak, on the authority of Ibn ‘Abbas ؓ, as proven by the *hadeeth* narrated by Muslim in his *Saheeh*, in which it was reported on the authority of ‘Abdullah Ibn ‘Amr Ibn Al-‘As ؓ that he said: I heard the Messenger of Allah ﷺ say, “Allah ordained the measures of the creation fifty thousand years before He created the heavens and the Earth – while His Throne was over the water.”⁽⁴⁾ They

(1) The *takhreej* has already been given.

(2) This *hadeeth* has been narrated authentically due to other supporting narrations (*saheeh lighairihi*); it was narrated by Ahmad in his *Musnad* (22705).

(3) Narrated by Ibn Jareer in his *Tareekh* (1/39).

(4) Narrated by Muslim in the *Book of Al-Qadar*, in the Chapter: The Ex-

said that this *taqdeer* was His writing of the measures with the Pen. This *hadeeth* proves that this took place after the creation of the Throne, so it is confirmed that the creation of the Throne preceded that of the Pen, with which the measures were written – and this is the opinion of the majority of scholars. The *hadeeth* of the Pen must therefore be understood to mean that it was the first of the created things in this world and this is supported by the narration of Al-Bukhari, on the authority of ‘Imran Ibn Husain ؓ that he said: The people of Yemen said to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, “We have come to you to learn the Religion and to ask you about the beginning of this universe.” The Prophet ﷺ said: “There was Allah and nothing else before Him...”⁽¹⁾ In another narration, he said, “There was nothing else with Him...”⁽²⁾ In a narration transmitted elsewhere, it was reported that he said, “His Throne was over the water and He wrote everything in the Record; and He created the heavens and the Earth.”⁽³⁾ In another version, it was reported that he said, “Then He created the heavens and the Earth.”⁽⁴⁾ They asked him about the beginning of the creation of the heavens and the Earth and that is why they said: “We have come to you... to ask you about the beginning of this universe.” So he answered only what they had asked, which is why he did not inform them about the creation of the Throne.

Section Regarding What Has Been Said Concerning the Description of the Creation of

change of Arguments Between Adam and Moosa (Peace Be Upon Them).

(1) Narrated by Al-Bukhari, in the *Book of the Oneness, Uniqueness of Allah* (7418).

(2) I have not found this wording in Al-Bukhari’s *Saheeh* or anywhere else.

(3) The *takhreej* for this *hadeeth* has already been given.

(4) The *takhreej* for this *hadeeth* has already been given.

His Promise and obeys His Messengers, He will admit him to Paradise.” He (Ibn ‘Abbas ؓ) said, “And *Al-Lawh Al-Mahfooz* is a tablet made from white pearl; its length is equivalent to the distance between the heaven and the Earth, its breadth is equivalent to the distance between the East and the West and its edges are pearl and ruby, its two sides are red ruby, its Pen is light, its words are hung upon the Throne and its base is in the lap of an angel.” ⁽¹⁾

Anas Ibn Malik ؓ and others from among the *Salaf* said, “*Al-Lawh Al-Mahfooz* is on the forehead of Israfeel.” ⁽²⁾

(1) This is a *mawqoof* narration and it is a baseless fabrication. In its chain of narrators is one Ishaq Ibn Bishr, who was known to be a liar and a fabricator of *hadeeth*.

(2) This is a weak *hadeeth* narrated by Ibn Jareer in his *Tafseer* (30/140).

Chapter: What Has Been Said Regarding the Creation of the Heavens and the Earth and All That Lies Between Them

Allah, Most High, says, ﴿ All praise be to Allah, Who created the heavens and the Earth, and originated the darkness and the light, yet those who disbelieve hold others as equal with their Lord ﴾ (Soorah Al-An‘am 6:1)

He, the Most High, says, ﴿ Indeed, your Lord is Allah, Who created the heavens and the Earth in six days ﴾ (Soorah Al-A‘raf 7:54). This is repeated in a number of verses in the Qur’an.

Scholars of *tafseer* hold two different opinions regarding the measure of these six days: The majority holds that they are like our (Earthly) days. It is reported on the authority of Ibn ‘Abbas ؓ, Mujahid, Ad-Dahhak and Ka‘b Al-Ahbar that: “Every day of them is equivalent to a thousand years of your reckoning.”

This was narrated by Ibn Jareer and Ibn Abi Hatim and it was the preferred view of Ahmad Ibn Hanbal in the book in which he refuted the arguments of the *Jahmiyyah*. It was also the preferred view of Ibn Jareer and a number of the later scholars – and Allah knows better. Later, we shall present evidence to support this opinion. Ibn Jareer narrated, on the authority of Ad-Dahhak Ibn Muzahim and others, that the names of the six days are: "*Abjad, Hawwaz, Hutti, Kalemun, Sa'fas* and *Qarasht*." Ibn Jareer also reported three sayings relating to the first days. He narrated, on the authority of Muhammad Ibn Ishaq, that he said, "The followers of the Torah say that Allah began the creation on Sunday, while the followers of the *Injeel* say that Allah began the creation on Saturday, while we Muslims, according to what has come to us from the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, hold that Allah began the creation on Saturday." And this saying which is reported by Ibn Ishaq from the Muslims was favored by a number of *Shafi'i* scholars of Islamic Jurisprudence and others. It was reported in a *hadeeth* on the authority of Abu Hurairah ؓ that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "Allah created the soil (or clay) on Saturday." ⁽¹⁾

Allah, Most High, says, ﴿ He it is Who created for you all that is on Earth. Then He *istawa* (rose over) toward the heaven and made them seven heavens and He is the All-Knowing ﴾ (Soorah Al-Baqarah 2:29)

He, Most High, says, ﴿ Say (O Muhammad): "Do you verily disbelieve in Him Who created the Earth in two days and you set up rivals (in worship) with Him?" That is the Lord of the '*Alameen* (mankind, jinn and all that exists). He placed therein (i.e. the Earth) firm mountains from above it, and He blessed

(1) Narrated by Abu Dawood in the Description of The Day of Judgment, Paradise And Hell (2789), by Ahmad (8141) with similar wording.

it, and measured therein its sustenance (for its dwellers) in four days equal (i.e. all these four days were equal in the length of time), for all those who ask (about its creation). Then He *istawa* (rose over) toward the heaven when it was smoke, and said to it and to the Earth: "Come both of you willingly or unwillingly." They both said: "We come willingly." Then He completed and finished from their creation (as) seven heavens in two days and He made in each heaven its affair. "And We adorned the nearest (lowest) heaven with lamps (stars) to be an adornment as well as to guard (from the devils by using them as missiles against the devils). Such is the Decree of Him the All-Mighty, the All-Knowing". (Soorah Fussilat 41:9-12) This proves that the Earth was created before the heavens, because it is like a foundation for the structure, as Allah, Most High, says, ﴿ Allah, it is He Who has made for you the Earth as a dwelling place and the sky as a canopy, and has given you shape and made your shapes good (looking) and has provided you with good things. That is Allah, your Lord, then blessed be Allah, the Lord of the '*Alameen* (mankind, jinn and all that exists) ﴾ (Soorah Ghafir 40:64)

He, Most High, says, ﴿ Have We not made the Earth as a bed? And the mountains as pegs? ﴾ (Soorah An-Naba' 78:6,7) – up to His Words, ﴿ And We have built above you seven strong (heavens). And have made (therein) a shining lamp (sun) ﴾ (Soorah An-Naba' 78:12,13)

He, Most High, says, ﴿ Have not those who disbelieve known that the heavens and the Earth were joined together as one united piece, then We parted them and We have made from water every living thing. Will they not then believe? ﴾ (Soorah Al-Anbiya' 21:30) – That is, "We parted the heaven and the Earth so that the winds blew, the rains fell and springs and